

“Strengthen One Another in the Lord”

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Let me testify that revelation is alive and active in God’s Church today. We have seen it in abundance in the most recent general conference—from the solemn assembly, where a new prophet and president of the Church was sustained, to the announcement of a new, unified effort to fulfill the Lord’s commandment that we love one another. I join Elder Jeffrey R. Holland in bearing witness that this recent “rush of revelation” is but one example “of the revelation that has guided this Church from its beginning.”¹

Let me bear witness in a more specific way that that same kind of divine revelation and guidance has simultaneously been operating in other aspects of God’s work in ways that may not have been as evident. Knowing that this new emphasis on Christlike ministering was to be announced at general conference, God has, in the preceding months, been preparing the way for that work to be accelerated, even when those who were being inspired may not have recognized the full purposes for which they were being prompted. President Henry B. Eyring noted this phenomenon in his priesthood session address when he said that “time after time in recent weeks, members of the Church have acted in my presence as if somehow they had anticipated what the Lord was going to do.”²

Viewed in retrospect—as such events are usually most clearly viewed—I can see how this has happened with respect to this women’s conference. The theme for this women’s conference is “Strengthen One Another in the Lord.” That theme is amazingly consistent with the new emphasis on ministering. In fact, one might describe ministering as an effort to strengthen one another in the Lord. The theme is so well adapted to highlight, explore, and explicate the new emphasis on ministering that was announced just weeks ago that future observers who are not careful will erroneously assume that those responsible selected the women’s conference theme *after* the new emphasis on ministering was announced, or at least with full knowledge that the announcement was coming. But I know from personal experience that the women’s conference theme was selected early last fall, many months before any public announcements about any changes to quorums or visiting teaching were made. And I am confident that those involved in the selection of that theme were not privy to any special inside information or involved in some intricate effort to coordinate the timing of events and

announcements—at least not any effort orchestrated by mortal beings. The fact that the women’s conference theme so well complements the call for ministering that sounded so clearly in general conference can be attributed only to what some have called celestial correlation.

Indeed, viewing events in the last fifteen years in light of the recent announcements reveals how the Lord has efficiently and effectively—though not always obviously—been preparing us, as a people, to be able to strengthen one another in the Lord in the new and holier way of ministering that was outlined in general conference.

At the risk of oversimplifying and maybe even underestimating the full significance of some key changes that have been effectuated in the Church in the last fifteen years, and guided only by my own not-fully-adequate post-hoc observation, let me outline, at a general level, one of the ways changes in the last fifteen years have prepared us, as a people, to embrace and carry out this new and holier ministering effort.

A Common Thread

I begin with the release and implementation of the manual *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* in 2004, which changed the way full-time missionaries operated throughout the world. Among the more notable changes was a shift from memorized, pre-scripted lessons to more flexible, Spirit-driven teaching in which missionaries would “master the concepts of the lessons [b]ut . . . teach the concepts in their own words under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit.”³ Because this new form of teaching depended on the Spirit rather than on a prewritten uniform text, the *Preach My Gospel* manual contained “chapters that [gave] extremely valuable information on how to recognize and understand the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”⁴

The most obvious benefit of this new approach was a more effective and powerful presentation of gospel truths to those whom the missionaries taught. But there can be little doubt that an equally important result of the *Preach My Gospel* manual was a cohort of returned missionaries who were better able to recognize and respond to the guidance of the Holy Ghost in both their daily lives and their future church service.

This emphasis on Spirit-driven gospel teaching was expanded beyond the missionary effort in 2013 with the adoption of the *Come, Follow Me* curriculum for youth.⁵ Once again there was a shift from pre-scripted lessons to more flexible, individualized teaching in which the key component was the ability to receive, recognize, and follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost. For those youth leaders who had learned and applied the principles of *Preach My Gospel* as missionaries, this was an easy transition, as it was merely the application of that program to a different setting. This was old hat to them. Not so for some of the rest of us. As I watched some of us older members—who had not had the benefit of a *Preach My Gospel* mission experience—struggle a bit with this transition from reliance on a scripted lesson plan to a more Spirit-driven teaching method, I wondered if the Lord had waited to fully reveal the *Come, Follow Me* youth curriculum until there was a critical mass of returned missionary youth leaders steeped in the principles of *Preach My Gospel* to carry forth the program with full energy.

The next step came with the announcement last fall that the *Come, Follow Me* curriculum would now be rolled out to the adults in their priesthood and Relief Society lessons.⁶ Again, this was a shift from using pre-scripted lessons to a more flexible, individualized form of teaching

that depends on the guidance of the Holy Ghost, in both the preparation and presentation of the lessons.

That then brings us to the most recent general conference. Only months after the *Come, Follow Me* curriculum was fully implemented among both the youth and the adults, we received a new vision of ministering. While the ministering effort may seem unconnected to the teaching and curriculum changes in *Preach My Gospel* and *Come, Follow Me*, in retrospect I see a common thread throughout all these changes: a shift (now seismic) from a pre-scripted formulaic teaching method to a Spirit-directed, flexible, individualized effort to bring people unto Christ. By learning to teach in the Savior's way, we are now better prepared to minister in the Savior's way.

A New Vision of Ministering

The new vision of ministering is, therefore, merely a continuation of the trend that I first noted with *Preach My Gospel*. Like these prior curriculum changes, this new vision of ministering—this new and holier way of strengthening one another in the Lord—requires us to set aside the pre-scripted lesson previously found in the *Ensign* and become more capable of recognizing and responding to the Spirit.

Given that trend, it should not be surprising that in his Sunday morning general conference address, President Russell M. Nelson emphasized the need for us to refine and enhance our ability to receive revelation. Consider these key observations and invitations from that talk:

One of the things the Spirit has repeatedly impressed upon my mind since my new calling as President of the Church is how willing the Lord is to reveal His mind and will. The privilege of receiving revelation is one of the greatest gifts of God to His children. . . .

. . . If we are to have any hope of sifting through the myriad of voices and the philosophies of men that attack truth, we must learn to receive revelation.

Our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, will perform some of His mightiest works between now and when He comes again. We will see miraculous indications that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, preside over this Church in majesty and glory. But in coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.

My beloved brothers and sisters, I plead with you to increase your spiritual capacity to receive revelation. Let this Easter Sunday be a defining moment in your life. Choose to do the spiritual work required to enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost and hear the voice of the Spirit more frequently and more clearly.⁷

Given the pattern that I have seen, I believe that President Nelson's heartfelt plea that we increase our spiritual capacity to receive revelation was not provided just so we can more fully carry out this new vision of ministering but also to prepare us for even greater challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. I am confident that the rush of revelation we have witnessed in the past month is not the culmination of the pattern I have noticed but merely the latest edition. Indeed, I believe that we are witnessing an acceleration in that pattern. In that regard, I note that it was eight years after *Preach My Gospel* that the *Come, Follow Me* curriculum was implemented for the youth. It was only four years between that and the full implementation of

that curriculum for the adults and only a few months after the announcement of that new curriculum when the new vision of ministering was announced. The changes seem to be coming faster and faster, which is further evidence that the Lord is hastening His “work in its time.”⁸ Stay tuned and buckle up. I am confident that there is more to come.

Inspired Ministering

But rather than speculating about the future, or dwelling too much on the past, we should consider how we can more fully embrace and implement the new vision we have been given. With that goal in mind, let me suggest five things we might do to enhance our ability to strengthen one another in the Lord through inspired ministering.

1. Understand the Full Purpose and Ultimate Aim of Ministering

The first suggestion is illustrated by a traditional story of which there are many versions:

There was once a Swiss guard who worked at the border of Austria. He worked there for many years and took a great deal of pride in his work.

One morning an Austrian man arrived at the border, riding a bicycle. On the front of his bike was a basket filled with sand. Another guard might simply have waved him through, but the Swiss guard did not. Instead, he brought out a special comb he kept for just such a purpose and began to sift through the sand in the basket. You see, he suspected the Austrian might be a smuggler. Finding nothing but sand, however, he waved the man through.

The same thing happened the next day, and the day after that. Though he never found anything, he kept on looking, day after day, for thirty years. Finally, one day the Swiss guard spoke to the Austrian man. “I must ask you a question,” he said, “that has been on my mind for many years. This is my last day of work. Today I shall retire. And all these years, I suspect you have been a smuggler. Now I ask you, for I must know—are you indeed a smuggler?”

The Austrian man hesitated, and the Swiss guard reassured him, “Do not worry. I give you my word of honour that I will not prosecute you. But I must know.”

“Very well,” said the Austrian. “Then I will tell you. I am indeed a smuggler.”

“Ah-ha!” said the guard. “I knew it! But each day I look through your basket and find nothing but sand. Tell me, please, what have you been smuggling?”

“Bicycles.”⁹

I worry just a bit that we will become so caught up in the excitement of this new emphasis on ministering and so focused on the details of what it requires in implementation that we, like the Swiss border guard, will lose sight of the bigger picture. For example, we might spend time deliberating about what counts as a ministering visit or as a ministering interview. In my view, such discussion is time fruitlessly spent combing through the sand in the basket. To the extent we find that happening, we should reevaluate what we are doing, lest we miss the truly important things God wants to accomplish with this new effort. We will be more constant, more efficient, and more effective in our efforts if we understand the full purpose, the ultimate aim, of our ministering efforts.

The Lord has asked us to engage in this new and holier ministering effort not just to relieve the temporal, emotional, and spiritual suffering of our fellow brothers and sisters—as important as that is to do. Feeding the poor, clothing the naked, and relieving the burdens of God’s children is extremely important and essential work. We should do all we can in that regard, and, in doing so, we should partner with others who have that same end in mind.

However, God, in His wisdom and love, wants to accomplish much more than that with our ministering efforts. He wants us to do something that we in the true Church of Jesus Christ are uniquely positioned to do. Our Heavenly Father's goal is—and our goal should therefore also be—the exaltation of all of His children. That requires that we not only comfort and lift the afflicted but that we help them draw closer to Christ through making and keeping sacred, exalting covenants. As President Nelson put it:

*Our message to the world is simple and sincere: we invite all of God's children on both sides of the veil to come unto their Savior, receive the blessings of the holy temple, have enduring joy, and qualify for eternal life.*¹⁰

That is our goal. Strengthening one another in the Lord through ministering is merely a means to that end. If we fail to understand that, we run the risk that we will be diverted off our main course, and we will soon focus on the sand in the basket and not on the bicycle. This will not only cause us to lose enthusiasm and energy as we get bogged down in details but can also cause us to fail to recognize and take advantage of all the tools we have been given to aid us, both in the implementation of the new vision of ministering and, more important, in the larger work of exalting all of God's children.

Let me give one example. Three years ago our leaders asked us to make efforts to enhance our Sabbath-day worship at church and at home. With all the energy and excitement that surrounds this new vision of ministering, some may think that it is time to lay aside efforts to enhance Sabbath-day worship so that we can concentrate on ministering, viewing the former as a substitute for the latter. If we do that, we will miss the common overarching goal of both efforts, and our ability to accomplish either will be greatly diminished.

As we have consistently been reminded—but I fear we do not always recall—the purpose of the effort to enhance our Sabbath-day worship was not merely to increase sacrament meeting attendance but to increase our faith in Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. The increase in our faith in God that comes from enhanced Sabbath-day worship will enhance our ability to minister and to strengthen one another in several ways.

For example, as previously noted, ministering in a new and holy way requires that we be more open and responsive to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Sabbath-day worship facilitates that kind of spiritual development. Proper Sabbath-day worship allows us to renew our baptismal covenant so that we may become clean again. Such purity opens the channels of revelation, as President Nelson taught us.¹¹ Enhanced Sabbath-day worship also helps us create in our homes an atmosphere in which the Holy Ghost can abide, thereby expanding the scope of holy places in which we can receive inspiration that is essential to ministering.

Similarly, enhanced Sabbath-day worship increases our love for our Heavenly Father and His Son. As we increase our faith in God through Sabbath-day worship, our love for God will increase. The more we know and trust God, the more we will love Him. That, in turn, causes us to want to worship Him more fully. Thus, as President Nelson noted in 2015, “Faith in God engenders a love for the Sabbath; faith in the Sabbath engenders a love for God.”¹²

Love of God is at the heart of the new ministering effort. The 2018 letter from the First Presidency announcing the new adjustments begins with reference to the two great commandments:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

...

*... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*¹³

As the words between these two commandments make clear, the order of the commandments is important. The first, to love God, is the “great commandment”; “the second is like unto it.”¹⁴ If we want to fully love our fellow beings, we need to first love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. As we do so, we will more fully feel God’s love for us, and we will more completely understand what true love is. An increase in our love for God will, in turn, increase our love for His children, our fellow beings. And as we love our fellow beings more, we will more naturally want to minister to them, to strengthen them in the Lord. The increased love for God that proper Sabbath-day worship engenders therefore increases our ability to minister to others, and both efforts advance God’s work to exalt His children.

Thus, enhanced Sabbath-day worship not only better prepares us to receive the revelation necessary to minister in a new and holier way but also helps provide the motivation we need to engage in that critical work.

If we keep our focus on the ultimate goal of our ministering efforts—rather than on the less important details—we will find that other divinely inspired teachings and programs are part of the same sacred work and that all aspects of the work can combine in new and powerful ways to accomplish that ultimate goal.

In that regard, we are witnessing the fulfillment of Paul’s remarkable prophecy “that in the dispensation of the fulness of times [God] might gather together *in one all things* in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.”¹⁵ All the changes I have discussed—from the introduction of *Preach My Gospel* to enhanced Sabbath-day worship to ministering in a new and holier way—are being brought together in one great effort to advance the work of salvation on both sides of the veil.

If we are to fully succeed in our ministering efforts, we must keep in mind the larger purpose and look for ways in which other seemingly disconnected efforts can be brought together in one to accomplish that larger purpose.

2. Develop Key Characteristics: Charity and the Companionship of the Holy Ghost

A second way we can enhance our ability to implement this new vision of ministering is to develop two key characteristics that are at the heart of the ministering effort—indeed, at the heart of all our efforts to advance God’s work. President Eyring noted these two critical elements in two different talks in this recent general conference. At the Saturday priesthood session, he stated:

*Municipal wards, companies, and strengthened quorums have all required at least **two things** to be successful in the Lord’s intent to have His Saints care for each other in the way He*

*cares for them. They succeed when the Saints feel the love of Christ for each other above their self-interest. The scriptures call it “charity . . . the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47). And they succeed when the Holy Ghost guides the caregiver to know what the Lord knows is best for the person whom He is trying to help.*¹⁶

To make sure we did not miss the point, President Eyring made it again in his Sunday morning general conference address:

*It seems there are two things [all great ministers] do. Great ministers have **qualified for the Holy Ghost as a nearly constant companion.** And they have **qualified for the gift of charity, which is the pure love of Christ.***¹⁷

Charity and the companionship of the Holy Ghost are critical to the success of our efforts to minister in a new and holier way. These two gifts from God mutually reinforce one another in the ministering effort. The Holy Ghost can sanctify us, which enables us to more fully feel God’s love for His children. And the expression of love for others facilitates receipt of the Holy Ghost. As President Eyring explained:

*It seems to me that we receive the Holy Spirit best when we are focused on serving others. . . . The Holy Ghost can . . . help us in our lifelong quest to have the gift of charity bestowed upon us.*¹⁸

Both of these characteristics are gifts from God, and each is a gift that the Book of Mormon indicates comes in large part as a result of earnest, constant prayer. Mormon concluded his instruction on charity with a fervent plea:

*Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ.*¹⁹

Those on the American continent who were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ had a similar experience with the gift of the Holy Ghost. As these Saints waited for the return of Christ on the second day of His visit, they gathered together to pray:

*And they did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them.*²⁰

Thus charity and the Holy Ghost are essential to the work of ministering. They mutually reinforce each other in that process, and, not surprisingly, both come as a gift from God, granted in part in response to earnest prayer. If we can develop our capacity to receive and act upon these two key gifts, our ministering efforts will be greatly magnified.

3. Recognize and Learn from Examples of Ministering

The third suggestion for enhancing our ability to strengthen one another through ministering is to recognize more fully all the ways and all the contexts in which ministering occurs and to better understand the great impact that such efforts can have.

Because we are no longer tethered to the pre-scripted monthly message and format that characterized home and visiting teaching, some may feel uncertain and hesitant about what ministering looks like and what they should do. Recognizing that ultimately the answers will come through individualized inspiration prompted by our love for those to whom we minister, it is still sometimes helpful to have some examples in mind to jump-start the revelatory process. Fortunately there are plenty of sources for such examples.

We can begin with the inspired insights provided by our leaders at the recent general conference. For example, Sister Jean B. Bingham powerfully noted:

Sometimes we think we have to do something grand and heroic to “count” as serving our neighbors. Yet simple acts of service can have profound effects on others—as well as on ourselves. . . .

Ministering can be done in a great variety of individualized ways. So what does it look like?

Ministering looks like . . . going for a walk, getting together for a game night, offering service, or even serving together. It looks like visiting in person or talking on the phone or chatting online or texting. It looks like delivering a birthday card and cheering at a soccer game. It looks like sharing a scripture or quote from a conference talk that would be meaningful to that individual. It looks like discussing a gospel question and sharing testimony to bring clarity and peace. It looks like becoming part of someone’s life and caring about him or her.²¹

Similar examples were provided by other speakers at general conference.²² We would all benefit from repeated review of those talks, which contain numerous examples of ministering that might spark the personalized revelation that must guide our efforts.

In addition to the examples provided in those inspired talks, we can find examples of inspired ministering in our everyday individual lives. If we, like Mormon, are “quick to observe,”²³ we will see that there are—and have been—inspired acts of ministering occurring all around us all the time.

My dear mother, now in her ninety-first year, has been a widow for more than twenty years. During most, if not all, of that time, she has received at least monthly visits from my boyhood friend Brad King. At one point I suppose Brad was assigned to my mom as her home teacher. And in that vein, through the first years, he was usually accompanied by one of his two sons. But as his sons went on missions and then moved away, Brad’s visits continued, often with his wife, Tami. More important, whenever an emergency arose that distance precluded me from responding to personally, my advice to my mother was, “Call Brad.” And Brad always came. Because of changes in ward boundaries, my mother lived in several different wards during that time, even though she had not moved. At some point, I was not sure that Brad was even in the same ward. But the visits continued. When my mother recently moved out of her home into an assisted living facility in another ward, Brad and Tami continued to visit regularly, at least until they left last fall to serve a mission in Hawaii. While the in-person visits have not continued due to distance, communication still occurs. What I suppose was a home teaching assignment for Brad became a simple but impactful ministering effort, motivated not by duty but by love—the kind of pure love of Christ that is at the heart of ministering. I have been inspired by Brad King’s powerful example of ministering.

In the past few years, Brad's efforts have been supplemented by those of a kind family with four young children who somehow adopted my mother as their extra grandma. I don't know how the connection with the Barneys first started. They may have been in the same ward, or it may have come from my mother's visits to Brother Barney, who, as a physical therapist, had attended to her needs over the years. What I do know is that I eventually learned to avoid a certain time on Sundays for my weekly call to my mother because I knew the Barneys would be there. And I knew that as much as my mom loved talking with me, visits from the Barneys were sacred, and my calls could wait. I am grateful to the Barneys for providing such a powerful example of what holy ministering looks like.

But such ministering does not need to be so long-standing and constant in order to have an impact. Sometimes simple acts of ministering can have profound impacts because of unique circumstances. When Peggy and I moved to Provo more than thirty years ago, she came somewhat reluctantly. She had really enjoyed living in Phoenix, where we had finally settled after living in six different homes in three different cities in our short married life. She finally agreed to the move only because she knew how much a chance to teach at the BYU Law School meant to me. To compound things just a bit more, our move came only weeks after Peggy had given birth to our second son, who, due to complications, spent the first several days of his mortal life in a neonatal intensive care unit. Adding to the reluctance was the fact that we also had a very active two-year-old, who at times required full parental attention from both parents.

Within weeks after we had arrived in Provo, I was called to serve in the bishopric of a young single adult ward that met on campus. That left Peggy to attend church by herself in a ward where she didn't know anyone, accompanied only by a small infant and a very active toddler.

One particular Sunday, Peggy awoke feeling a bit overwhelmed. The prospect of going to church, chasing a two-year-old while attending to a newborn infant, and getting absolutely nothing out of the meetings except a physical workout seemed daunting. The thought came to her: "Why go?" Then came another thought—and a plan: "If I don't go at all, no one will notice. Kevin will assume that I went to the home ward, and the people in the home ward will assume I went with Kevin to the young single adult ward."

For a moment she felt liberated. But her conscience quickly got the better of her, and she dutifully readied the children and herself and rushed off to sacrament meeting. On arriving at church, still feeling discouraged, Peggy saw Brother Larson, an older member of the ward who in the prior weeks had noticed her plight and had often silently taken our infant son to free up Peggy to chase the two-year-old. Brother Larson usually didn't say anything; he simply noticed when the situation reached crisis mode, held out his arms, and received and cradled the baby. This Sunday, however, he greeted Peggy at the door, held out his arms before any crisis had started, and said five simple words: "This will be worth it."

Peggy stood there stunned as the Spirit overwhelmed her, and her attitude changed. She felt like God had sent an angel to comfort her by saying exactly what she needed to hear. And God had. My guess is that Brother Larson had no idea of the impact he had on Peggy and on our family. But we consider him a ministering angel who modestly demonstrated the way small and simple inspired acts of ministry can have a profound and long-lasting impact.

If we will carefully and prayerfully observe, we will find inspiring acts of ministry all around us. Those examples can, in turn, inspire us to act in the same way. In that regard, let me note the importance and power of ministering in ways that are not formally assigned to us. Neither Brother Larson nor the Barneys had any specific church assignment to serve, and what might have started out as a church assignment for Brad King soon transformed from a duty to a charity-driven effort to lift and love. And yet without assignments, each of these individuals blessed my loved ones and brought them closer to Christ. President M. Russell Ballard stated that we “need to be careful not to just minister to those names on a list but to minister to all of Heavenly Father’s children.”²⁴

Another source of revelation-prompting examples of ministry is the scriptures. By my count, the terms *minister* or *ministering* appear 647 times in the scriptures. There is thus much to be learned in the scriptures about ministry. Let me cite one example. In 3 Nephi we read about Nephi, the grandson of Helaman the Younger. He would later be one of the twelve disciples chosen by Christ during His ministry in ancient America. Nephi lived at a time of great wickedness, when the people’s “hearts were turned from the Lord their God.”²⁵ In response, Nephi “began to testify, boldly, repentance and remission of sins through faith on the Lord Jesus Christ,”²⁶ as any good Church leader or missionary would.

But Nephi did more than that. As recorded in 3 Nephi 7:17, “He did minister many things unto them.” And this was no ordinary ministry. According to verse 17, “Nephi did minister with power and with great authority.” In the next verse we read about the remarkable effect ministering with such power and authority had on the people: “And it came to pass that . . . [the people recognized that Nephi] had greater power than they, *for it were not possible that they could disbelieve his words.*”²⁷ Nephi ministered with such power and authority that the people could not disbelieve his words. This did not mean that they all immediately joined the Church. Indeed, the record indicates that “but few . . . were converted.”²⁸ Most of the rest of them were just “angry with him.”²⁹ Agency is operative in all circumstances, so our actions will not always yield the fruit that we desire. But those who chose not to respond positively to Nephi still felt the love of God so powerfully through his ministering that they could not disbelieve his words.

We might be tempted to think that ministering with such power and authority happened only in the past or that it is limited to those who are prophets and apostles. Yet in a talk tellingly entitled “Ministering with the Power and Authority of God,” given during the recent priesthood session, President Nelson spoke about

*faithful women [in our day] who understand the power inherent in their callings and in their endowment and other temple ordinances. These women know how to call upon the powers of heaven to protect and strengthen their husbands, their children, and others they love. These are spiritually strong women who lead, teach, and **minister fearlessly in their callings with the power and authority of God!***³⁰

Now I do not know exactly how one ministers with such power and authority that people cannot disbelieve what they say, but the example of Nephi is provided in the scriptures to encourage us to act on the belief that it is possible, even in our day. The scriptures abound in such insights about ministering.

Of particular significance to me in that regard are the references to Christ's ministering efforts, especially those in the Book of Mormon. Indeed, from the early part of the record to the very end, there is a focus on what that book calls Christ's ministry in the Americas.

In 1 Nephi 13, the Savior told Nephi, "I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things *which I shall minister unto them*, which shall be plain and precious."³¹ Similarly, Nephi prophesied that the remnant of Lehi's seed would "come . . . to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, *which was ministered unto their fathers by him*."³² In like manner, in 3 Nephi 10, just before beginning the record of Christ's personal visit to ancient America, Mormon noted:

*Soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them—
Showing his body unto them, **and ministering unto them**; and an **account of his ministry**
shall be given hereafter.*³³

Given Mormon's description and Nephi's early prophecies, everything that follows in the rest of 3 Nephi might properly be called Christ's ministering efforts among Lehi's descendants.³⁴ I believe we will receive increased insight into ways in which we can minister in a Christlike manner if we carefully study what Christ did and said during that particular ministry.

For example, we might note how the Savior interacted "one by one" with all those in attendance at His initial appearance³⁵ and when later blessing and praying for their little children "one by one."³⁶ Most, if not all, effective ministering is done one by one. The Savior Himself provided a personal example of the critical need to focus on individuals, even despite His eternally busy schedule.

Similarly, we might note the Savior's emphasis on ordinances during His ministry in ancient America. As part of His ministry, He taught about baptism,³⁷ He initiated the sacrament,³⁸ and He blessed the little children³⁹ and others.⁴⁰ As we minister to those around us, we might profitably ask ourselves, "What ordinance do they need next in their lives?" and then think of ways in which our ministering can help them receive that ordinance, for it is only through the receipt of ordinances and the making and keeping of accompanying covenants that the ultimate end of exaltation can be achieved.

Thus I join President Ballard in inviting you

*to study 3 Nephi by identifying every reference to the word minister in any of its forms and every reference to the phrase one by one. Once you have thoroughly identified these words and phrases, please consider what the Book of Mormon teaches about ministering.*⁴¹

Let me offer one additional thought suggested by the ministering example of the Savior in the scriptures—this one from the New Testament. As Jesus hung on the cross, suffering immense pain and concluding both His earthly ministry and His culminating atoning sacrifice, one of His final ministering acts was again directed at the one—in this case a special one. As recorded in John:

When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

*Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!*⁴²

In our earnest haste to meet the needs of all around us, let us not overlook our primary responsibility to minister in our homes and to our families. Like all the work of the Lord, the most important ministering work we “will ever do will be within the walls of [our] own homes.”⁴³

Once we have firmly fixed in our minds the full purpose of ministering, once we begin to inculcate in our lives the gifts of charity and the Holy Ghost, and once we have opened up revelation by observing and learning from the ministering examples of others—those from around us and those found in the scriptures and in the teachings of our leaders—I would suggest there are yet two other things we might do (suggestions four and five) to make our ministering efforts more productive and fulfilling.

4. Unite with Others: Be One in the Work

The fourth suggestion is to recognize that our efforts will be more productive if we are united with others. This is a more unified ministering effort than we have attempted in the past. We have not only consolidated Melchizedek Priesthood quorums but are also urging and requiring more coordination, cooperation, and communication between the elders quorum and the Relief Society. And there will be more need for that same unified effort with Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood leaders as assignments are made. We will also need to think about how other efforts in areas such as missionary work, family history, and temple work can be used as tools in the ministering effort and how, conversely, ministering efforts may assist in missionary, temple, and family history work. This work will succeed in its fullest only when we are “of one heart and one mind,”⁴⁴ as is required of the Zion people we hope to become.

That in turn will happen only as we focus on the Savior and bring people, including ourselves, unto Him. As I noted before, God is, in this dispensation, bringing all things together in one, as Paul prophesied. But He is doing so, as it says in Ephesians 1:10, by bringing all things together “in Christ.”

To return to our original women’s conference theme, we are to strengthen one another *in the Lord*.

5. True Ministry Invites People to Come unto Christ

My fifth and most important suggestion is that we always recognize and never forget that true ministering occurs only when we invite and encourage others to come unto Christ. We may temporarily meet the immediate needs of those around us, but only He can provide the living water⁴⁵ and “the living bread”⁴⁶ that will allow them to be continually nourished in such a way that they realize their full potential as “beloved spirit son[s] or daughter[s] of heavenly parents [with] a divine nature and destiny.”⁴⁷

To succeed in our ministering, we need to bring people unto Christ. “Our charge” and “our privilege” is, as President Nelson testified, “to help prepare the world for the Second Coming of the Lord.”⁴⁸ And one way to do that is by ministering in a Christlike manner. As Sister Bingham noted, “What better way to prepare to meet Him than to strive to become *like* Him through lovingly ministering to one another!”⁴⁹

I testify that Jesus Christ lives and that He guides this Church through living prophets and through all others who will align their wills with His. He will someday return to earth to reign as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.⁵⁰ As we minister to others in His way, we will “be filled with [the] love, which [God] hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ.” If that happens, then “when he shall appear we shall be like him.”⁵¹ May we realize that great blessing in our lives is my prayer, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Be with and Strengthen Them,” *Ensign*, May 2018.
2. Henry B. Eyring, “Inspired Ministering,” *Ensign*, May 2018.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Missionary Service,” *First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, 11 January 2003 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 19; quoted in Richard G. Scott, “The Power of *Preach My Gospel*,” *Ensign*, May 2005.
4. Scott, “The Power.” See chapter 4, “How Do I Recognize and Understand the Spirit?” in *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 89–102.
5. See *Teaching the Gospel in the Savior’s Way: A Guide to Come, Follow Me: Learning Resources for Youth* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012).
6. See letter from the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 25 August 2017 (making the change effective on January 1, 2018).
7. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2018.
8. D&C 88:73.
9. “The Border Guard,” Mid-Island StoryTellers, http://midislandstorytellers.com/uploads/3/2/4/1/3241687/the_border_guard.pdf.
10. Russell M. Nelson, “Let Us All Press On,” *Ensign*, May 2018.
11. See Nelson, “Revelation for the Church.”
12. Russell M. Nelson, “The Sabbath Is a Delight,” *Ensign*, May 2015.
13. Matthew 22:37, 39; see letter from the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2 April 2018.
14. Matthew 22:38–39.
15. Ephesians 1:10; emphasis added.
16. Henry B. Eyring, “Inspired Ministering”; emphasis added.
17. Henry B. Eyring, “His Spirit to Be with You,” *Ensign*, May 2018; emphasis added.
18. Henry B. Eyring, “Inspired Ministering.” In the same vein, Elder David A. Bednar once observed, “Praying for others with all of the energy of our souls increases our capacity to hear and to heed the voice of the Lord” (“Pray Always,” *Ensign*, November 2008).
19. Moroni 7:48.
20. 3 Nephi 19:9.
21. Jean B. Bingham, “Ministering as the Savior Does,” *Ensign*, May 2018.
22. See, e.g., in the May 2018 *Ensign*, Gérald Caussé, “It Is All About People”; Holland, “Be with and Strengthen Them”; Reyna I. Aburto, “With One Accord”; Bonnie L. Oscarson, “Young Women in the Work”; Henry B. Eyring, “Inspired Ministering”; and Dallin H. Oaks, “The Powers of the Priesthood”—all of which contain stories of ministering experiences.
23. Mormon 1:2.
24. M. Russell Ballard, in “Invitation to Act,” *Effective Ministering*, general conference leadership meetings video, 28 March 2018, 00:49–01:01, [lds.org/mycalling/ministering/effective-ministering?lang=eng](https://www.lds.org/mycalling/ministering/effective-ministering?lang=eng).
25. 3 Nephi 7:14.
26. 3 Nephi 7:16.
27. 3 Nephi 7:18; emphasis added.
28. 3 Nephi 7:21.

29. 3 Nephi 7:18, 20.
30. Russell M. Nelson, “Ministering with the Power and Authority of God,” *Ensign*, May 2018; emphasis added.
31. 1 Nephi 13:35; emphasis added.
32. 1 Nephi 15:14; emphasis added.
33. 3 Nephi 10:18–19; emphasis added.
34. While the document “The Living Christ” testifies that the resurrected Christ “visited among those He had loved in life,” it also says that He “ministered among His ‘other sheep’ (John 10:16) in ancient America” (“The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” [1 January 2000]).
35. 3 Nephi 11:15.
36. 3 Nephi 17:21.
37. See 3 Nephi 11:22–38.
38. See 3 Nephi 18:1–12.
39. See 3 Nephi 17:21.
40. See 3 Nephi 17:7–9.
41. Ballard, in “Invitation to Act,” 00:15–00:42.
42. John 19:26–27.
43. Harold B. Lee, “Be Loyal to the Royal Within You,” BYU devotional address, 11 September 1973.
44. Moses 7:18.
45. See John 4:14.
46. John 6:51.
47. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (1995).
48. Nelson, “Ministering with the Power.”
49. Bingham, “Ministering as the Savior Does”; emphasis in original.
50. See Revelation 19:16.
51. Moroni 7:48.